

Testing for *C.difficile*

**Purpose:** To avoid over-diagnosis of *C.difficile* infection (CDI) and unnecessary isolation and treatment of asymptomatic carriers. To prevent transmission of *C.difficile* within the healthcare setting.

**Symptoms of CDI:** persistent watery diarrhea, abdominal pain, increased white blood cell count, fever

### Indications for specimen collection

- Patient has diarrhea without another potential cause (e.g. recent administration of laxatives, tube feeds, bowel prep etc.)
- Presence of diarrhea defined as >3 loose stools per day, 1 hour or more apart for >2 days. Refer to type 6 or 7 on the Bristol Stool Chart. Do not send types 1-5.
- Routine order is written "Stool for *C. difficile* x 1" (one specimen per diarrheal episode)
- Patients with negative *C. difficile* toxin, but with persistent diarrhea with no other established cause, may have repeat specimen submitted after > 3 days

### Not Indications for specimen collection

- Formed stool
- Test of cure
- After administration of laxatives. Do not send stool specimen on patient who received laxatives within 24-48 hrs.
- Repeat specimens from patients positive for *C. difficile* will not be accepted for testing until at least 7 days have elapsed
- Prior history of *C. difficile* in the absence of current indications noted above

#### Bristol Stool Chart

Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely Liquid

### Initiation of Contact Precautions

- Initiate contact precautions as soon as *C.difficile* infection is suspected
- Initiate prior to specimen collection
- In the case of suspicion/diagnosis of patient in semi-private room: only patient suspected of having C diff requires precautions; roommate may be moved out without requiring precautions.

### Test Interpretation (EIA= enzyme immunoassay, GDH= glutamate dehydrogenase)

- EIA +                    Continue Contact Precautions
- EIA-/ GDH -        Discontinue Contact Precautions
- EIA-/ GDH+        Continue Contact Precautions → Specimen sent for PCR testing
- GDH +/PCR-        Discontinue Contact Precautions
- PCR+                    Continue Contact Precautions for *C.difficile*

### Discontinuation of Contact Precautions

- Completion of antibiotics for *C.difficile* and patient is symptom free for 72 hours, whichever is longer

#### History:

9/14    Developed by Infection Prevention Committee

11/14    Reviewed and approved by Clinical Council

Guidelines are intended to be flexible. They serve as reference points or recommendations, not rigid criteria. Guidelines should be followed in most cases, but there is an understanding that, depending on the patient, the setting, the circumstances, or other factors, guidelines can and should be tailored to fit individual needs.